

Eliciting Students' Understanding of the Processes of Governance at the Local Level

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ABSTRACT

This paper has discussed knowledge, attitudes and practices (KAP) of senior secondary school students towards governance processes in the local government in Ibadan, Nigeria. On the basis of the theory of political socialization as proposed by Coleman (1986) and the philosophy of democratic education proposed by Dewey (1944), the study assumed a cross-sectional survey design. One hundred and forty-six SS2 students sampled out of three government-run secondary schools by simple random sampling were the respondents. A researcher-designed KAP questionnaire, with a 25-item multiple choice-based knowledge test and Likert-scaled attitude and practice subscales, was used to collect the data. Independent-samples t-tests and one-way ANOVA were used to test three null hypotheses at the 0.05 significant threshold with Multiple Classification Analysis (MCA) and Scheffe post-hoc tests being applied where significant differences were found. The results showed a statistically significant gender difference in political knowledge scores that favored male students [$t(144) = 5.14, p < .05, d = 0.85$] and in political attitudes [$t(144) = 3.53, p < .05, d = 0.58$]. There was also a major subject-specialization effect on political knowledge [$F(2, 143) = 22.35, p < .001, \eta^2 = .24$], with Arts students performing better than the Social Science and Science students. These results help us see a very serious gap in formal political education and emphasize the necessity of organized civic education incorporated into the Nigerian secondary school curriculum.

Keyword : *political knowledge; civic education; governance; local government; secondary school students; Nigeria; political socialization.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

The key to democratic governance is an informed and an active citizenry. Formal political education, especially in the case of the United States, Germany and France, provides citizens, especially the young with knowledge of national institutions, civil rights, civic responsibilities and the processes of democratic accountability and helps to stabilize political cultures, which are rather stable even in mature democracies (Coleman, 1986; Dewey, 1944).). The same, however, is not true of Nigeria. The country which inherited colonial administrative systems that were ill suited to the indigenous political traditions during the independence in 1960 has found it difficult to ensure a sustainable democratic culture based on civic illumination and real popular engagement (Federal Republic of Nigeria [FRN], 2004). Although there have been decades of democratic practice since

the restoration of civilian governance in 1999, participation by the citizenry in governance processes especially at the local government level which is the most accessible level of government among the ordinary citizens of Nigeria is shallow and inconsistent..

This problem is especially pronounced among young people. The population of Nigeria is predominantly young: according to the National Population Commission (2006), about 43.2 percent of the population was aged below fourteen years, and 19.3 percent aged between fifteen and twenty-four years (Index Mundi, 2016). These younger generations, who are nearly or have just started voting age, are the main target group of democratic revival in Nigeria. However, there is always evidence which indicates that the Nigerian secondary school students have little formal information about the political institutions and processes especially at the local government level and that current civic education delivery is divided, under-funded and unrelated to the political realities that students experience (FRN, 2004; Coleman, 1986).

The study of the level of political knowledge that students have at the moment and their attitude towards political participation is thus not only theoretically relevant but also practical urgency. This need is addressed in the present study which empirically evaluates the knowledge, attitudes and self reported practices of SS2 students in Ibadan towards governance at the local level. The research is informed by the political socialization theory of Coleman (1986) that formal education is the main institutionalization process through which political knowledge, norms, and civic orientations are communicated, and the democratic education philosophy of Dewey (1944, 1975) that suggests that, in order to become truly democratic, one should experience a process of deliberate learning and that schools are the only places where civic.

The study provides evidence of curriculum policy, teacher education, and civic engagement programs in Nigeria by mapping the KAP profiles of students by subject specialization and gender. The results add to an emerging body of research on the subject of political socialization in sub-Saharan Africa and provide a local empirical point of reference on assessing the effects of formal and informal political education on Nigerian youth.

Statement of the Problem

The history of civic education in Nigeria tells the story of the larger conflict between colonial legacies and the post-colonial nation-building requirements. The colonial education system was modeled to give birth to administration functionalists and not democratic citizens, a factor that remained to influence the Nigerian education system into the post independence era (FRN, 2004). Civic and political education has not been established as a compulsory and examined subject in its own right in the secondary school level, although the National Policy on Education (FRN, 2004) had acknowledged the need to prepare students to participate in democracy. There is government subjects, and the extent and pedagogical coverage of the subjects differ considerably across schools and instructors.

Nigeria has a constitutionally important local government level. Local government is the third tier of government established in the Constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria of 1999 with specific roles to undertake in the form of primary healthcare, primary education and local infrastructure. Nevertheless, studies always record that citizens of Nigeria have little knowledge about local government operations, accountability and participation; especially among young people (FRN, 2009). This was expressly recognized in the Second National Youth Policy (NYP, 2009), which enumerated as one of the important responsibilities of young Nigerians the need to foster and defend democracy and civility when it comes to governance of the land as well as by supporting peace, security and development. The policy however did not offer much in the way of how schools should make these civic aspirations operational in the curriculum.

This is worsened by the fact that the Nigerian schools have their civic learning broken up structurally. Political knowledge is generally developed by students as a result of a mix of formal education in Government subjects, informal socialization by peers and family, and exposure to the

media in an uncoordinated manner without any form of a coherent curriculum construction. The school is the most important institutional location of political socialization as Coleman (1986) stressed but only when a curriculum is carefully and strictly concerned with political knowledge, political values, and participant skills.. In the absence of this institutional commitment, as is mostly the case with the secondary schools in Nigeria, the acquisition of civic knowledge becomes accidental and skewed due to factors like subject specialization, gender socialization, and socio-economic background and not deliberate educational planning.

Theoretical Framework

The research is based on two complementary theories. According to the political socialization theory of Coleman (1986), formal schooling is the most systematically accessible way of passing the political culture, civic norms, and institutional knowledge of a particular society to the next generation. Coleman maintained that education is not just the best predictor of individual political knowledge, but the determinant that is crucial in establishing the ability of citizens to engage in democratic life through their informed participation. Such theoretical stance suggests that formal civic education deficits will yield quantifiable deficits in political knowledge and that deficits will be allocated in systematic ways across groups with varying access to the relevant educational information including students in various subject specialization courses..

The philosophy of democratic education developed by Dewey (1944, 1975) also fills in the gaps left by Coleman in his view of socialization in education as it focuses on the experiential and participatory aspects of civic education. To Dewey, democratic citizenship is not just a body of knowledge that has to be passed but a collection of dispositions and abilities that include critical thinking, a cooperative approach to problems, and informed judgment that must be developed actively through school experiences which reflect democratic practice.e. The framework proposed by Dewey proposes that attitudes of students towards political participation with or without their considering politics as meaningful, accessible and personally relevant are at least as significant as their factual knowledge of institutions and both are influenced by the quality of civic education they get.e.

Collectively, these frames give both the diagnostic prism and the normative standard to the current study: political knowledge and attitudes are to be thought of as product of educational experience, not as inherent individual traits, and their distribution according to gender and subject specialization categories indicates the unequal civic socialization impacts of current schooling systems.

The Political Knowledge of the students of the Secondary Schools.

Studies concerning the political knowledge of adolescents in sub-Saharan African settings continue to show low knowledge of formal institutional knowledge and high knowledge of informally obtained political awareness, through experience. The youth tend to be informed of local political actors and events in a detailed practical manner, acquired by means of family discussion, community watch and exposure to the media, but show little knowledge of formal constitutional institutions, rights and accountability procedures (Ichilov, 1990; Torney-Purta et al., 2001; Schulz et al., 2018). This tendency, intense informal recognition, feeble formal knowledge, is directly applicable to the situation in Nigeria, where the institutions of local government are visible to the public, but not to the majority of citizens. Larreguy and Marshall (2017) empirically showed that in non-consolidated democracies like Nigeria, the formal education is the main factor of civic and political participation, and, as a result, the quality of school-based political content has an even stronger effect on the outcomes of youth participation.

The study has found that subject specialization is an important mediating variable in the acquisition of political knowledge among students in the secondary schools. Arts and Humanities

students, who tend to have courses like Government, History and Literature, were more likely to show better results on formal measures of political knowledge as compared to Science students whose curriculum did not give them much systematic exposure to political institutions (Torney-Purta et al., 2001; Niemi and Junn, 1998). Neundorf et al. (2016) also determined that the gap in home-based political socialization is filled by civics instruction, which supports the argument of providing systematic curriculum in all subject tracks. This supposition that the Social Science students should perform better than Arts students on political knowledge tests is not well substantiated in the empirical literature, in part due to the fact that the curriculum of the Social Science subject in the Nigerian context does not necessarily entail substantive content in the local government at the SS2 level (Sele, 2020).

Socialization in Politics and Gender

The difference in gender when it comes to political knowledge and civic participation has been widely recorded in different cultural settings. Adolescent samples also demonstrate a consistent pattern of higher male scores on formal political knowledge tests, which is explained by the fact that boys are more exposed to political discussions both in the family and with peers, and political participation is more strongly defined as a masculine activity in most cultural settings (Conover and Searing, 2000; Torney-Purta et al., 2001; Mondak and Anderson, 2004). Wolak and McDevitt (2011) discovered that female adolescents scored much less on political knowledge scales than their male counterparts even after the researchers controlled the influence of political interest and the feeling of self-efficacy, indicating that the difference is due to the socialization patterns of structure, not to individual abilities. These gender gaps can be supported by family-level factors that selectively expose male and female students to political information and political discussions in Nigeria, where traditional gender norms still influence the pattern of household socialization (NYP, 2009; Robinson and Gottlieb, 2021). Gottlieb (2016) also warns that the delivery of civic information may not be sufficient to seal such gaps in which asymmetric gender norms have deep roots.

The combination of knowledge, self-efficacy, family political culture, and structural factors including perceived barriers to participation contribute to attitudes toward political participation among the young people with a complex interaction. Studies indicate that students with reported positive attitudes and beliefs towards politics as an area of civic life are more likely to exhibit higher levels of political self efficacy, or are more prone to expressing civic behaviors such as reading political news, talking about politics and expressing interest in political positions (Bandura, 1997; Conover and Searing, 2000). Campbell and Niemi (2016) proved that state-based requirements of formal civic education are correlated positively with greater political knowledge, which supports the perspective that structured education influences knowledge and attitudinal results. According to McClendon (2022), when messages that promote efficacy were integrated in civic education programmes, the political interest and participation of young women increased significantly, which suggests that it is possible to achieve attitudinal change through a purposeful pedagogical construction. In Nigerian secondary schools, where political education is not formally provided, informal socialization in family political culture might be the stronger source of the formation of attitudes towards politics than the formal experience of education (Bello and Alhassan, 2024).

Local Government Awareness and Youth Civic Engagement

The local government level is, in theory, the most open form of democratic governance to the common person, including youth: it governs direct community, visible services, and offers good access to direct civic activity such as national politics does not. Nevertheless, the knowledge about local government systems, operations, and systems of accountability has always proved to be

minimal among the Nigerian citizens, even the educated young population (Ichilov, 1990; FRN, 2009; Akinyetun, 2021). This gap can be explained in part by the poor institutional performance of most local government councils in Nigeria -low service delivery credibility undermines the incentive of learning and engaging with local institutions by citizens- and in part by the lack of local government content in school civic education (Dewey, 1944; Coleman, 1986; Sele, 2020). Onyewuchi et al. (2024) affirm that the political engagement of Nigerian youth in the local government is limited by structural constraints and lack of civic knowledge that are reinforcing.

The need to fill this gap is in part explained by the studies on civic knowledge and democratic consolidation: the trend of higher civic knowledge among citizens, including youth, is associated with more pronounced patterns of democratic accountability and participation in the country (Torney-Purta et al., 2001; Schulz et al., 2018). Reichert and Print (2018) also discovered that the formal and informal settings of civic learning have a positive impact on political participation, which is most pronounced when school-based and community-based learning complement one another. Due to the democratic character of Nigeria, the idea of providing secondary school learners with meaningful knowledge of local governing processes is not only an educational objective but a democratic necessity (Larreguy and Marshall, 2017; Falade and Adeyemi, 2015).

2. RESEARCH METHOD

The research was cross-sectional survey design, which is suitable to determine the distribution of attitudes, knowledge, and self-reported behaviors, in the case of specific subgroups of a population at one time only (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). The instrument was designed using the KAP (Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices) survey framework that allowed the simultaneous measurement of three analytically distinct but theoretically interrelated dimensions of student civic engagement with the local government. The KAP approach is a long-standing quantitative technique of determining the gaps between what populations know, believe, and do with respect to a target domain and has been put to productive use in educational and civic research practice (Andrade et al., 2020).

Population and Sampling

The target population was composed of SS2 students of the public secondary schools of Ibadan, Oyo State, the largest city in the sub-Saharan Africa and the capital of one of the most educationally developed states in Nigeria.. On the basis of their urban location, similarity of socio-economic catchment areas and comparable Government subject teaching provisions, purposive sampling was done on three public secondary schools to ensure comparability of institutional context across sites. Simple random sampling was used to select students within every school. One hundred and sixty copies of the questionnaires were given; 146 copies of the questionnaires were returned in their entirety and participated in the analysis giving a response rate of 91.3 percent. Table 1 demonstrates the demographic characteristics of the respondents.

There were two reasons why SS2 students were chosen. To begin with, students who are in secondary school at this age have already been introduced to Government subject content addressing the local government structures and this provides them with a relevant base of knowledge to assess. Second, SS2 students have an average age of 1617, just before the voting age, and hence the construction of political knowledge and attitudes is especially significant to their new civic identities.

Table 1. Demographic Profile of Respondents (N = 146)

Variable	Category	n	%
Gender	Male	78	53.4
	Female	68	46.6
Subject Specialization	Arts	46	31.5
	Social Science	48	32.9
	Science	52	35.6
Total		146	100.0

Research Instrument

Data were collected using a researcher-developed KAP questionnaire comprising three sections. Section B was a 25-item multiple-choice Knowledge Test covering four thematic areas relevant to local governance: (i) the nature and scope of government; (ii) the principles underlying the creation of local government; (iii) the structure and functions of local government; and (iv) education and local governance. Items were drawn from and adapted using past SSCE Government examination questions to ensure content validity and curricular alignment. Each correct answer was scored 1 and incorrect answers scored 0, yielding a maximum knowledge score of 25.

Section C comprised 22 Likert-scaled attitude items (Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree) assessing students' orientations toward political participation, local governance, and political education. Section D comprised 6 dichotomous (Yes/No) practice items capturing students' self-reported civic behaviors, particularly in relation to school governance (e.g., prefect roles, contesting for school offices). Content validity of the instrument was established through expert review by two specialists in Social Studies and Civic Education. A pilot administration with 20 students not included in the main sample confirmed adequate item clarity.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Three research questions guided the study:

1. What is the level of political knowledge of SS2 students regarding selected local governance issues?
2. Do students of different subject specializations (Arts, Social Science, Science) differ significantly in their political knowledge?
3. Does subject specialization influence students' political attitudes toward identified governance concepts?

Corresponding null hypotheses were:

H_{01} : There is no significant difference in the political knowledge of male and female students.

H_{02} : There is no significant difference in the political knowledge of Arts, Social Science, and Science students.

H_{03} : There is no significant difference in the political attitudes of male and female students.

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics (means, standard deviations, frequencies, and percentages) were computed for all variables. Three inferential tests were applied. H_{01} and H_{03} were tested using independent-samples t-tests comparing male and female group means, with effect sizes estimated using Cohen's d ($d = 0.20$ small; 0.50 medium; 0.80 large). H_{02} was tested using a one-way between-subjects ANOVA, with effect size reported as eta-squared (η^2 ; $\eta^2 = .01$ small; $.06$ medium; $.14$ large). Where the ANOVA yielded a significant F-ratio, Scheffé's Multiple Range Test was applied as a conservative post-hoc procedure to identify specific between-group differences, and Multiple Classification Analysis (MCA) was used to quantify each group's deviation from the grand mean. All tests were conducted at the $\alpha = .05$ significance level. ANOVA assumptions of normality (assessed via item-level distributions) and homogeneity of variance (Levene's test) were satisfied for all analyses.

Ethical Considerations

Informed consent was obtained from school authorities and, for student participants, parental consent and student assent were secured prior to data collection. Participation was voluntary and responses were anonymized.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the empirical findings organized by research hypothesis. Tables report all relevant statistics including degrees of freedom, test statistics, p-values, and effect sizes.

Item-Level Knowledge Performance (Research Question 1)

Table 2 presents the item-level performance of all 146 respondents on the 25-item knowledge test. Items are categorized by the proportion answering correctly: items with $\geq 60\%$ correct responses are classified as 'strongly familiar'; 41–59% as 'averagely familiar'; 30–40% as 'fairly familiar'; and below 30% as 'poorly familiar.' These thresholds were established a priori based on conventional mastery benchmarks in achievement testing (Bloom, 1956).

Table 2. Item-Level Performance on the 25-Item Local Governance Knowledge Test (N = 146)

Item No.	Correct Answer	Correct (n)	Correct (%)	Incorrect (n)	Incorrect (%)	Familiarity Level
1	B	46	31.5	100	68.5	Fairly familiar
2	C	36	24.7	110	75.3	Poorly familiar
3	A	57	39.0	89	61.0	Fairly familiar
4	D	64	43.8	82	56.2	Averagely familiar
5	O	62	42.5	84	57.5	Averagely familiar
6	A	74	50.7	72	49.3	Averagely familiar
7	A	89	61.0	57	39.0	Strongly familiar
8	A	60	41.1	86	58.9	Averagely familiar
9	D	22	15.1	124	84.9	Poorly familiar
10	C	104	71.2	42	28.8	Strongly familiar
11	C	82	56.2	64	43.8	Averagely familiar
12	D	48	32.9	98	67.1	Fairly familiar
13	A	63	43.2	83	56.8	Averagely familiar
14	D	84	57.5	62	42.5	Averagely familiar
15	D	33	22.6	113	77.4	Poorly familiar
16	C	50	34.2	96	65.8	Fairly familiar

Item No.	Correct Answer	Correct (n)	Correct (%)	Incorrect (n)	Incorrect (%)	Familiarity Level
17	D	66	45.2	80	54.8	Averagely familiar
18	D	48	32.9	98	67.1	Fairly familiar
19	A	58	39.7	88	60.3	Fairly familiar
20	A	45	30.8	101	69.2	Fairly familiar
21	C	27	18.5	119	81.5	Poorly familiar
22	B	39	26.7	107	73.3	Poorly familiar
23	C	21	14.4	125	85.6	Poorly familiar
24	A	71	48.6	75	51.4	Averagely familiar
25	A	99	67.8	47	32.2	Strongly familiar

Note. Familiarity classification: Strongly familiar $\geq 60\%$ correct; Averagely familiar = 41–59%; Fairly familiar = 30–40%; Poorly familiar < 30%.

Of the 25 knowledge items, respondents were strongly familiar with only 3 items (12%), averagely familiar with 9 items (36%), fairly familiar with 7 items (28%), and poorly familiar with 6 items (24%). Items with the lowest correct-response rates (Items 9, 15, 21, 23) clustered around the structure of local government functions, the appointment process for local council officials, and constitutional provisions governing local government precisely the formal institutional knowledge most directly addressed by Government subject content. The overall pattern indicates that while students possess some incidental political knowledge (particularly of politically visible topics captured in high-familiarity items), their understanding of formal local governance processes is systematically inadequate. Across all 25 items, the majority of respondents answered incorrectly on 65% of items (16 out of 25), confirming a statistically meaningful knowledge deficit relative to the 50% random-response baseline.

Hypothesis 1: Gender Differences in Political Knowledge

H_0 1 predicted no significant difference in the political knowledge of male and female students. An independent-samples t-test was conducted comparing the mean knowledge scores of male ($n = 78$) and female ($n = 68$) students.

Table 3. Independent-Samples t-Test: Political Knowledge by Gender (N = 146)

Group	n	M	SD	df	t	p	Cohen's d
Male	78	11.19	2.57	144	5.14	< .001	0.85
Female	68	8.45	3.82				

Note. Two-tailed test. Cohen's $d = 0.85$ indicates a large effect size.

The results indicate a statistically significant difference in political knowledge between male ($M = 11.19$, $SD = 2.57$) and female students ($M = 8.45$, $SD = 3.82$), $t(144) = 5.14$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.85$. Male students scored significantly higher than female students on the local governance knowledge test. The effect size (Cohen's $d = 0.85$) is large, indicating a practically meaningful and not merely statistically trivial difference. H_{01} is therefore rejected.

Hypothesis 2: Subject Specialization and Political Knowledge

H_{02} predicted no significant difference in political knowledge across subject specialization groups (Arts, Social Science, Science). A one-way between-subjects ANOVA was conducted with subject group as the independent variable and knowledge score as the dependent variable.

Table 4. One-Way ANOVA: Political Knowledge by Subject Specialization (N = 146)

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p	η^2
Between Groups (Subject)	418.37	2	209.19	22.35	< .001	.24
Within Groups (Residual)	1338.64	143	9.36			
Total	1757.01	145				

Note. $\eta^2 = .24$ indicates a large effect size. Levene's test of equality of error variances: $F(2, 143) = 1.87$, $p = .16$ (assumption satisfied).

The ANOVA yielded a significant main effect of subject specialization on political knowledge, $F(2, 143) = 22.35$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .24$. Subject specialization accounts for approximately 24% of the variance in political knowledge scores a large effect by conventional standards (Cohen, 1988). H_{02} is rejected. Table 5 presents the Multiple Classification Analysis (MCA) showing each group's deviation from the grand mean ($GM = 9.92$), and Table 6 presents the Scheffé post-hoc comparisons.

Table 5. Multiple Classification Analysis (MCA): Deviations from Grand Mean by Subject Group

Subject Group	n	Group Mean	Deviation from Grand Mean (9.92)	Beta
Arts	46	11.39	+1.47	
Social Science	48	10.96	+1.04	
Science	52	7.65	-2.26	.49
Multiple R				.49
Multiple R ²				.24

Table 6. Scheffé Post-Hoc Analysis: Pairwise Comparisons of Subject Group Knowledge Means

Comparison	Mean Difference	Scheffé p-value	Interpretation
Arts vs. Science	+3.74	< .001	Significant: Arts > Science
Social Science vs. Science	+3.31	< .001	Significant: Social Science > Science
Arts vs. Social Science	+0.43	.71	Not significant

Note. Arts and Social Science students are classified together in Subset 2; Science students form a distinct lower-performing Subset 1.

The Scheffé post-hoc analysis reveals that the significant overall ANOVA effect is driven primarily by the substantially lower performance of Science students ($M = 7.65$) relative to both Arts ($M = 11.39$) and Social Science ($M = 10.96$) students. The difference between Arts and Social Science students is small and statistically non-significant ($p = .71$). Science students' lower scores reflect their comparatively limited curriculum exposure to Government and civics content, confirming the prediction derived from Coleman's (1986) political socialization theory that differential educational exposure to political content produces measurable knowledge differentials.

Notably, Arts students marginally outperformed Social Science students, contrary to the expectation that Social Science students' curriculum might provide stronger political knowledge foundations. This finding that subject-label alignment with politics does not automatically translate into superior political knowledge represents a contribution to knowledge. It suggests that factors beyond curriculum content, such as teacher quality, instructional emphasis, and out-of-school socialization, also mediate knowledge acquisition. This is discussed further in the Discussion section.

Hypothesis 3: Gender Differences in Political Attitudes

H_{03} predicted no significant difference in political attitudes between male and female students. An independent-samples t-test was conducted on attitude mean scores derived from the 22-item Likert attitude scale.

Table 7. Independent-Samples t-Test: Political Attitude by Gender (N = 146)

Group	n	M	SD	df	t	p	Cohen's d
Male	78	79.42	10.56	144	3.53	< .001	0.58
Female	68	73.96	7.69				

Note. Two-tailed test. Cohen's $d = 0.58$ indicates a medium-to-large effect size.

A significant gender difference was found in political attitude scores, $t(144) = 3.53$, $p < .001$, $d = 0.58$. Male students ($M = 79.42$, $SD = 10.56$) expressed more favorable political attitudes than female students ($M = 73.96$, $SD = 7.69$). The effect size (Cohen's $d = 0.58$) is medium-to-large, indicating a meaningful and not merely incidental group difference. H_{03} is therefore rejected.

Attitude and Practice Profiles

Table 8 presents the distribution of student responses across the 22 attitude items. Table 9 presents students' self-reported political practices.

Table 8. Students' Attitudes Toward Selected Political Issues (N = 146; % responses)

No.	Item	SA (%)	A (%)	U (%)	D (%)	SD (%)
1	Honest people do not take part in politics.	10.5	16.4	5.5	24.7	32.9
2	Students should not take part in politics.	29.5	20.5	7.6	29.5	11.0
3	Local government councils are not relevant in Nigeria.	15.1	44.5	10.3	14.4	15.8
4	The best way of making money is by taking part in politics.	25.3	21.2	10.3	22.6	20.5
5	Politics is a game for adults only.	21.3	26.0	11.0	23.3	16.4

No.	Item	SA (%)	A (%)	U (%)	D (%)	SD (%)
6	It is a strict responsibility of every citizen to take part in politics.	21.9	20.5	19.9	19.2	18.5
7	Local government councils perform better under democratic government.	24.7	32.2	20.5	18.5	4.2
8	Politics is not good for students.	22.6	29.5	14.3	18.5	15.1
9	Most students have political ambitions while in school.	39.7	24.7	6.2	11.0	18.5
10	Educated people should not take part in politics.	25.3	30.2	12.3	12.3	19.9
11	Nigerians do not recognize politics at the local level.	13.7	23.3	11.0	39.0	13.0
12	To be a good citizen one should take part in politics.	22.6	46.5	13.7	11.0	8.2
13	Every school pupil should have knowledge of politics.	38.4	32.9	8.2	16.4	4.1
14	To be a full-time politician one must have participated in local politics.	34.2	18.5	25.3	13.7	8.2
15	Political education is very important for school children.	28.8	33.6	8.2	14.4	15.1
16	Local government politics is a training ground for future politicians.	24.0	40.4	14.4	12.3	8.9
17	It is good to encourage friends to be interested in politics.	17.1	36.3	7.5	25.3	13.7
18	I would like to be a politician when I grow up.	50.0	23.3	19.9	6.2	13.7
19	Whether I know about politics or not, I can still be a good Nigerian.	19.2	37.0	17.8	6.2	19.9
20	Politics is a dirty game, so gentlemen should not take part.	23.3	18.5	15.1	17.8	25.3
21	It is good to learn about politics in school.	26.3	34.2	17.1	8.2	4.1
22	A good Muslim/Christian should not take part in politics.	24.0	29.5	12.3	27.4	6.5

Note. SA = Strongly Agree; A = Agree; U = Undecided; D = Disagree; SD = Strongly Disagree.

Table 9. Students' Self-Reported Political Practices (N = 146)

No.	Practice Item	Yes (n)	Yes (%)	No (n)	No (%)
1	Have you ever been elected as a school prefect?	78	53.4	68	46.6
2	Did you succeed in carrying your schoolmates along in your duties?	91	62.3	55	37.7
3	Did you enjoy your tenure as a prefect?	75	51.4	71	48.6
4	Would you accept the offer of being made a school prefect?	75	51.4	71	48.6
5	Would you like to contest for a school office?	115	78.8	31	21.2
6	Is being a school prefect a disruption to one's academic process?	80	54.8	66	45.2

Discussion of Findings

Low Formal Political Knowledge: The Curriculum Deficit.

The result that the respondents gave a low correct-response rate on 65% of the local governance knowledge items, with only three items attracting a strongly-familiar-level response, validates the hypothesis grounded in Coleman's (1986) political socialization theory: political knowledge among students will be superficial, disjointed, and sporadic when formal civic education is absent or inadequate. The items attracting the lowest correct-response rates (Items 9, 15, 21, 23) all concerned formal institutional mechanisms—the appointment and removal of local council officials, constitutional provisions, and local government funding—precisely the knowledge domains most dependent on deliberate curriculum instruction rather than informal socialization. This trend is consistent with what Torney-Purta et al. (2001) describe as a civic literacy gap: students learn about the surface phenomena of politics through informal means (family, media, peer discussion) while remaining ignorant of the institutional rules and accountability mechanisms that govern democratic practice. Schulz et al. (2018) similarly found in their 24-country ICCS 2016 study that procedural and institutional knowledge items consistently produced the weakest performance across diverse educational systems, confirming that this is a global pattern requiring deliberate curriculum attention. The fact that such a gap is especially pronounced at the local government level is further unsurprising, given that local government content in the Nigerian Government syllabus is chronically under-taught and under-examined (FRN, 2004; Sele, 2020).

Knowledge and Attitudes Gender Differentials.

The large male difference in both political knowledge [$t(144) = 5.14, p < .001, d = 0.85$] and political attitudes [$t(144) = 3.53, p < .001, d = 0.58$] confirms a long-standing trend in the political socialization literature. According to a study by Conover and Searing (2000) it has been recorded that in cultures where political engagement is coded as a masculine sphere, male adolescents are much more likely to be exposed to political discourse within the family, to be elicited to pursue political matters, and to hold a sense of political self-efficacy—the belief that their political actions can have an impact (Bandura, 1997). Mondak and Anderson (2004) further established that gender-based differences in political knowledge are structural in nature, persisting across diverse demographic controls, while Wolak and McDevitt (2011) traced the origins of the gender knowledge gap specifically to adolescence—the very developmental stage studied here. The strong effect size ($d = 0.85$) of the gap in knowledge indicates that this is not a fringe difference but a structurally significant difference rooted in gender-differentiated out-of-school socialization experiences. Hoskins et al. (2021) show that open classroom discussions are one of the few school-based interventions that demonstrably narrow such gaps, offering a practical instructional implication for Nigerian civic educators.

It has an implication to educational practice: school-based political education needs to explicitly consider gender-differentiated access to political knowledge through learning opportunities that actively develop and activate female students political interest and self-efficacy instead of passively recreating the informal socialization advantage that male students gain in the classroom. It is especially pertinent to the argument put forward by Dewey (1944) who claims that the school should not only reflect, but also counter the existing social inequalities in civic preparation.

Subject Specialization: The Reason Arts Students did better than Social Science Students.

The result of the ANOVA that the Arts students significantly performed better than the Science students ($\eta^2 = .24$), but that Arts students also slightly performed better than the Social Science students (M difference = 0.43, $p = .71$) serves a significant gap in the literature on subject-differentiated political socialization.. The assumption of better political knowledge among Social Science students is based on a curriculum hypothesis that fails to bear out in practice: although on paper the Social Science track includes Government and Economics, the instructional level at which local government is taught differs significantly between teachers and schools. Arts students, in their turn, tend to be exposed to the political themes in more textually comprehensive and analytically challenging forms that seem to facilitate higher levels of remembering and using the political knowledge.

This result expands on the theory of Coleman (1986) by showing that the political socialization impact of formal education is mediated not only by the subject-label nearness to political material but also by the richness, consistency, and analytical quality of civic schooling. Niemi and Junn (1998) similarly demonstrated that the amount and recency of civics content, rather than mere course enrolment, predict knowledge outcomes—a finding that explains why nominal Social Science placement does not guarantee superior political knowledge. It is also reminiscent of the views of Dewey (1944) that civic learning is best achieved when political ideas are experienced across a variety of disciplines rather than being isolated in a single political course. Neundorf et al. (2016) reinforce this point by showing that civics instruction compensates for absent parental political

socialization, an effect that is greatest among students who receive systematic and sustained civic content regardless of subject track. The implication to curriculum policy is that political education must be incorporated throughout all subject areas, including the Sciences, to close the knowledge gap observed in this study (Campbell & Niemi, 2016; Reichert & Print, 2018).

Attitudes, Practices, and the Knowledge-Attitude-Practice Gap.

The overall positive disposition toward political participation as indicated by the attitude survey; the majority of the respondents concurred that political education is important to school children (Items 13, 15, 21), that local government politics train future leaders (Item 16), and that good citizens were expected to participate (Item 12) show that the students had pro-civic attitudes that was not accompanied by the same level of formal knowledge. This is a knowledge, attitude and practice (KAP) gap that is well established in the civic education literature (Ichilov, 1990; Torney-Purta et al., 2001; Schulz et al., 2018): students can be attitudinally oriented to participate, but lack the knowledge and skills to participate effectively. Bello and Alhassan (2024) documented precisely this pattern among Nigerian secondary school students in Kaduna State, finding that civic education enhanced political awareness and attitudes yet failed to translate into substantive community participation, confirming that pro-civic dispositions and formal political competence are not equivalent.

The picture is slightly different in the practice data (Table 9). Although 78.8% of them were willing to compete to hold a school office (Item 5) and 53.4% of them said they had been elected to hold a school prefect office (Item 1), a significant 54.8% of them said they found the responsibilities of a school prefect to be interfering with academic progress (Item 6). This eagerness to be involved in the political areas coupled with fear of their academic expenses indicates that the political desires of the students are limited by the school culture that has failed to make civic activism part of their regular academic life. This is the institutional incoherence of which Dewey (1944) was so wary: schools, which teach the principles of democracy in the classroom, but organize student life in manners that punish civic action send out mixed messages that, instead of supporting civic growth, actually discourage it.

The partial resistance to political participation (Items 2, 5, 8, and 20, 29.5% to 43.1% in SD/D direction) best accounts of the ambivalence of political participation is due to the fact that students are worried that their performance as students will be undermined by political involvement, which is again consistent with the results of Ichilov (1990) on the ambivalence. They are not anti-democratic feelings but logical reactions to a school and social environment that does not support political engagement.

Recommendations

The recommendations that follow are directly based on the empirical results of this research and in the theories of Coleman (1986) and Dewey (1944).

Since there is a substantial gap in knowledge among all three groups of subjects, and more specifically among the students of Science subjects, the Federal Ministry of Education, in liaison

with curriculum development agencies, ought to include structured political education material—including local government organization, functions, and accountability systems—into the national secondary school curriculum as a mandatory component for all subject specializations, not just Government or Social Science tracks. This will address the curriculum gap observed across all three groups, consistent with the evidence of Campbell and Niemi (2016) that formal civic education requirements produce measurable gains in political knowledge, and of Larreguy and Marshall (2017) that education is the principal driver of civic engagement in developing democracies such as Nigeria.

The considerable gap between gender in terms of knowledge and attitudes ($d = 0.85$ and $d = 0.58$, respectively) demands specific pedagogical interventions. Schools must actively undertake measures to attract female students to the political learning process, such as girl-specific civic empowerment programmes, debates and simulations to model female political participation, and mentoring by female civic role models. These plans are supported by the findings of Conover and Searing (2000) on gender-differentiated political socialization, and are further reinforced by McClendon (2022), whose field experiment in Zambia demonstrated that efficacy-promoting civic education substantially narrowed gender gaps in political interest and participation among young women. Wolak and McDevitt (2011) and Hoskins et al. (2021) additionally show that open classroom climates that encourage discussion are among the most effective school-based strategies for reducing female students' civic knowledge and efficacy deficits without reinforcing the socialization disadvantages they face outside school.

The knowledge-attitude-practice gap reported in this study—students who expressed pro-civic attitudes yet demonstrated limited formal knowledge and restricted civic practice—confirms that attitudinal orientation is a necessary but insufficient condition for active democratic participation. This gap indicates that experiential and participatory civic learning is required. As demonstrated by Dewey (1944) and empirically validated by Reichert and Print (2018), schools should establish functional Student Representative Councils with genuine governance responsibilities, giving students the opportunity to develop political competencies through practice rather than instruction alone. Akinyetun (2021) corroborates this approach, showing that structural inclusion of youth in governance processes produces more durable civic engagement than information-provision programmes alone.

To close the divide between the abstract institutional knowledge and the actual civic reality, National Orientation Agency (NOA) and state level civic education agencies need to collaborate with the secondary schools in providing structured local government awareness programmes such as guided interactions with local council officials, visits of community leaders to the schools and provision of local government documents and the Nigerian Constitution to the classroom.y.

The teacher education institutions must make sure that all pre-service teachers, irrespective of subject specialization, are grounded in civic education pedagogy, with the teaching of the content of local governance. The practising teachers should be given updated content knowledge on local government structures and participatory teaching methods in-service professional development programs.

4. CONCLUSION

This research was aimed at evaluating the level of knowledge, attitudes, and practices of SS2 students about the processes of governance in the local government in Ibadan, Nigeria. The produced empirical evidence has shown three main findings with direct implications in the policy and practice of civic education. To begin with, the formal political knowledge of the sampled students is inadequate: the respondents got the majority of the questions on local governance knowledge questions wrong, and specifically in the area of institutional mechanics the exact knowledge needed to excel in democratic participation at the local level. Second, there are substantial and practically meaningful gender differences in political knowledge ($d = 0.85$) as well as political attitudes ($d = 0.58$), which favor male students, which is consistent with the patterns of gender socialization difference in the more general political socialization literature. Third, political knowledge is greatly predicted by subject specialization ($r = .24$), and the performance of Science students is significantly lower than Arts and Social Science students a fact that indicates the civic price of not preparing non-humanities students in systematic political education..

More importantly, such results also reveal a rather significant gap in already existing theoretical predictions: Arts students did better than Social Science students, which contradicts the hypothesis that subject-label closeness to political material ensures a better knowledge of politics. This result is enriching to the political socialization theory proposed by Coleman (1986) since it has shown that the intensity and the pedagogical quality of the civic education, rather than its nominal subject matter, is what defines knowledge outcomes.

There are various limitations of the study. The sample is limited to three urban government-run secondary schools in Ibadan, which cannot be inferred to be representative of the entire range of Nigerian secondary school settings, such as rural and privately-run schools. The cross-sectional design will only give a picture of KAP at a specific point in time but will not permit a causal conclusion of how knowledge and attitudes are developed. The content-valid knowledge test covered a small area of local governance content; a more broad-based measure could have shown different patterns.

Future studies must use multi-site and longitudinal designs to monitor the progression of political knowledge, attitudes and civic behavior between junior and senior secondary school, and further on, to explicitly explore the predictive value of the quality of civic education at school, family political socialization process and neighborhood political climate in predicting development of civic competency. Intervention studies that test the structured civic education programs in accordance with the recommendations of this paper would yield the causal evidence required to convert these findings into scalable educational policy.

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